DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 299 574 CS 211 542

AUTHOR Aiex, Nola Kortner
TITLE Storytelling: Its Wide-Ranging Impact in the Classroom. ERIC Digest Number 9, 1988.
INSTITUTION ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills, Bloomington, IN.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 88
CONTRACT RI88062001
NOTE 3p.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses - ERIC Information Analysis Products (071)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Class Activities; Elementary Secondary Education; Expressive Language; Learning Activities; Narration; *Oral Language; *Story Telling
IDENTIFIERS *Story Telling by Children

ABSTRACT

Storytelling, a creative art form with a long history and considerable instructional potential, is increasingly regarded in schools and communities as literature. Recent papers and articles in the ERIC database discuss the use of storytelling in the classroom to develop language abilities, literature appreciation, critical thinking and comprehension, and understanding of community and self. Storytelling is effective in fostering a relaxed and intimate atmosphere in the classroom. Numerous activities can be employed to build children's storytelling skills. For a classroom teacher who wishes to use storytelling, it is best to begin with a simple story with action, a definite climax, and a conclusion the students will find satisfactory, and to remember that enjoyment is the first and chief consideration. The second consideration in effective storytelling should be to encourage exploration and experimentation with language. (Twenty-two references are attached.) (SR)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED 299574

ERIC DIGEST Number 9, 1988
Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills

Storytelling: Its Wide-Ranging Impact in the Classroom

by Nola Kortner Aiex

Storytelling is a creative art form that has entertained and informed across centuries and cultures (Fisher, 1985), and its instructional potential continues to serve teachers. Storytelling, or oral literature, has many of its roots in the attempt to explain life or the mysteries of the world and the universe – to try to make sense out of things (Tway, 1985). In doing so, the characters and themes in the stories have become cultural and often cross-cultural archetypes of historic and continuing importance (Lasser, 1979). Even in today's technological world, we have not changed to such a degree that the archetypes presented in traditional oral literature are no longer applicable (Livo and Rietz, 1986).

Rosen (1986) enumerates several facts about the universality of narrative that merit consideration: 1) human beings dream and speak to themselves in narrative (inner narrative speech), 2) a basic form of narrative is not only telling but also retelling, and 3) narrative is oral in the sense that an individual can engage with it fully without encountering it in written form. Storytelling, probably the oldest form of narrative in the world, is not the same as reading aloud, because in storytelling, the interaction between teller and listener is immediate, personal, active, and direct. Preece (1987) discusses 14 narrative forms which children use routinely and regularly.

Storytelling in the classroom

In 1984, the Commission on Literature of the National Council of Teachers of English applauded an emerging trend in schools and communities which emphasizes storytelling as literature (Suhor, 1984). Numerous articles and papers entered in the ERIC database between 1985 and 1988 have discussed the benefits of storytelling in developing language abilities, appreciation of literature, critical thinking and comprehension, and understanding of community and self.

In discussing how storytelling involves the control of language for narrative, for example, Wyatt, *et al.* (1986) describe the application of storytelling in teaching children to write as though they were doing so for media. Alparaque (1988) notes another important benefit related to the development of the appreciation of literature – the power of storytelling to bind attention and to bridge real and imaginary worlds.

George and Schaer (1986) investigated the effects of three mediums for presenting literature to children and discovered that storytelling and dramatization were significantly more effective in facilitating recall of prose content than was television. These findings indicated that storytelling is a viable method for stimulating children's imaginations, ultimately leading to a higher cognitive level in student responses. Reinehr (1987) discussed ways to use mythic literature to teach children about themselves and to help them write their own stories and legends. For very young children, the sequencing of events or the shaping of stories may be difficult, as children tend to ramble. However, sharing stories can give youngsters more of a "sense of story" – an awareness that can help them in both reading and writing. In reading, for example, a sense of story can help children to predict and know what to expect, and to read with more awareness of cause and effect, sequence, and other story factors related to comprehension (Kempter, 1986; Trabasso and Van Den Broek, 1985). In writing, children learn to apply such structures while telling their own stories and giving shape to their experiences. (Tway, 1985)

Perhaps storytelling's greatest value for a teacher is its effectiveness in fostering a relaxed and intimate atmosphere in the classroom. Scott (1985), an experienced Australian teacher/storyteller, explains how this practical and general objective can relate to the other benefits from using storytelling: It can 1) introduce children to a range of story experiences; 2) provide young students with models of story patterns, themes, characters, and incidents to help them in their own writing, oral language, and thinking; 3) nurture and encourage a sense of humor in children; 4) help put children's own words in perspective; 5) increase knowledge and understanding of other places, races, and beliefs; 6) introduce new ideas and be used to question established concepts without threat to the individual; 7) lead to discussions that are far ranging and often more satisfying than those arising from formal lessons; and 8) serve as the most painless way of teaching children to listen, to concentrate, and to follow the thread and logic of an argument.

Some aids for effective storytelling

To build children's storytelling skills, Plourde (1985) recommends activities that focus on role playing, generating character, helping students find an appropriate voice, and developing the ability to make logical conclusions. Plourde elaborates on a dozen techniques appropriate for children in kindergarten through grade 6. One, for example, has the teacher or one child relate the beginning of a familiar fairy tale and another child make up an entirely new ending.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (1984) offers several suggestions for making low-cost crafts materials that facilitate storytelling. Among them is the construction of a simple mini-cinema illustrating sequential events of a story. These stages of the story may then be presented with a flexible strip of drawings operated by pulling a string.

Gross and Batchelder (1986) present exercises for older elementary and middle school students designed to improve group dynamics and create a learning environment for storytelling. One technique involves using a circle to practice games inspired by modern dance education and native American rituals. These exercises help older students who are apt to

Nola Kortner Aiex is the Coordinator of Resources in Education *for the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills.*

CS 211 542

be self conscious to become more confident, willing to participate, and supportive of the storytelling process.

Music—classical or popular, recorded or live—can also be used to set the scene for storytelling, as can puppets and other simple props. (Sidorsky, 1985) But effective storytelling is a versatile strategy that stirs the imagination and enables children to visualize with few or no visual aids at all.

The classroom teacher as storyteller

For a classroom teacher who wishes to use storytelling, it is best to begin by choosing a simple story with only a few characters and an uncomplicated plot. The story should have action, the plot should be understandable to the listeners, and the events of the story should have a definite climax that leads to a conclusion the students will find satisfactory.

Folk and fairy tales are the easiest kinds of stories for beginning storytellers to communicate (Ramey, 1986; Taub, 1984). In selecting these or any story, it is important to keep in mind the age of the children in the audience. Scott (1985) advises the storyteller to be flexible, to expect unexpected reactions, and to remember that enjoyment the first and chief consideration.

Scott and other researchers (*e.g.*, Ramey, 1986) emphasize that a storyteller need not be a "performer," but rather a person who has good memory and listening skills, who sincerely likes the story chosen for telling, and who knows the story so well that it can be recreated for an audience without any uncertainty or panic. Storytellers who are too "actorish" usually fascinate the audience, but at the expense of the story.

The second consideration in effective storytelling should be to encourage exploration and experimentation with language (Schwartz, 1987). Constructing meaning through use of language is an implicit goal in storytelling. A language development focus can recommend retelling. Stories that are told and retold develop a patina with each new telling. Children's participation in storytelling provides not only novelty to stimulate the child's curiosity, but also enough familiarity to allow a child to perceive relationships and to experience success at using language (Wason-Ellam, 1986).

References

Alparaque, Idrenn. "Child and storying," 1988. 46pp. [See upcoming *Resources in Education* for ED number.]

Fisher, Walter R. "The narrative paradigm: In the beginning," *Journal of Communication*, 35 (4), Fall 1985, pp. 73-89.

George, Yvetta, and Schaer, Barbara. "An investigation of imposed-induced imagery methods on kindergarten children's recall of prose content." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Education Research Association, 1986. pp. 48 [ED 278 974]

Gross, Amelia, and Batchelder, Mary. "Storytelling: A process approach to speaking skills." In Nugent, Susan Monroe (Ed.), *Integrating Speaking Skills into the Curriculum*, New England Association of Teachers of English 1986. pp. 48 [ED 274 002]

Kempter, Susan, and Edwards, Linda. "Children's expression of causality and their construction of narratives," *Topics in Language Disorders*, 7 (1), December 1986, pp. 11-20.

Lasser, Michael. "Weaving the web of story: Archetype and image as the bearers of the tale," *Children's Literature in Education*, 10, (1), pp. 4-10.

Livo, Norma J., and Rietz, Sabdra A. *Storytelling: Process and Practice, XXXXXXX: Littlejohn, Libraries Unlimited, 1986.*

Plourde, Lynn. *CLAS: Classroom Listening and Speaking: K-2.* Tucson, Arizona: Communication Skill Builders, 1985. [ED 275 099; not available from EDRS]

Preece, Alison. "The range of narrative forms conversationally produced by young children," *Journal of Child Language*, *14* (2), June 1987, pp. 353-373.

Ramey, Mel. "Mastering the art of storytelling takes training and experience," *Highway One*, 9 (4), Winter 1986, pp. 47-51.

Reinehr, Frances. "Storytelling," *Teachers and Writers Magazine*, *18* (3), January-February 1987, pp. 1-7.

Rosen, Harold. "The importance of story," *Language Arts*, 63 (3), March 1986, pp. 226-237.

Schwartz, Marni. "Connecting to language through story," *Language Arts*, *64* (6), October 1987, pp. 603-610.

Scott, Patricia. "Storytelling: A guide to the art," *P.E.N. (Primary English Notes) 49*, New South Wales, Australia: Primary English Teaching Association, 1985. 9pp. [ED 263 552]

Sidorsky, Phyllis. "This way to the axolotls: A visit with Alan Heath in London," *Childhood Education*, 62 (1), September-October 1985, pp. 30-31.

Suhor, Charles. *1984 Report on Trends and Issues in English: A Summary of Reports from the NCTE Commissions.* 10pp. ED 239 290]

Taub, K. Deborah. "The endearing, enduring folktale," *Instructor 94* (4), November-December 1984, pp. 61-70.

Trabasso, Tom, and Van Den Broek, Paul. "Causal thinking and the representation of narrative events," *Journal of Memory and Language*, *24* (5), October 1985, pp. 612-630.

Tway, Eileen. *Writing Is Reading: 26 Ways to Connect.* Urbana, Illinois: ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills; National Council of Teachers of English, 1985. 56pp. [ED 253 877]

United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). *Low-Cost Educational Materials. How to Make, How to Use, How to Adapt. Inventory, Vol. 3.* Bangkok, Thailand, 1984. 126pp. [ED 279 306]

Wason-Ellam, Linda. "Storytelling extends literary language," *Highway One*, *9* (2), Spring 1986, pp. 33-39.

Wyatt, Helen *et al.* "Writing for the media," *PEN (Primary English Notes) 57*, Rozelle, Australia: Primary English Teaching Association, 1986. 7pp. [ED 272 890]

ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills

Indiana University
Smith Research Center
2805 East Tenth Street
Bloomington, Indiana 47408
(812) 335-5847

This publication was prepared with funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under contract no. RI88062001. Contractors undertaking such projects under government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their judgment in professional and technical matters. Points of view or opinions, however, do not necessarily represent the official view or opinions of the Office of Educational Research and Improvement.